

THE RIDE PRODUCT TEST

HEATED KIT

It's more effective and easier to use than ever, but which is the right heated riding gear for you?

By Simon Weir Photographs by Mark Manning and Simon Lee

THE NIGHTS ARE drawing in and temperatures are falling. Yet while the sun might be losing its warmth, there's no need to shiver on the bike this winter – not with heated kit. So no more complaining about the temperature – unless you've gone overboard and you're too hot, that is.

The technology used in heated kit has come on in leaps and bounds since we last tested it four years ago. We've gathered together four sleeved jackets and six waistcoats that draw their power from the bike's battery, along with battery-pack alternatives. We also have nine pairs of gloves to save your fingertips from freezing.

The great news is that almost all of the heated kit here is good – mostly very good. Which it should be, as it is all fairly expensive. The quality of finish is good across the board and levels of heat are generally extremely toasty. The biggest variations come in fit and style – which have a surprisingly large impact on the performance of the gear.

Wearing heated kit

Heated kit needs to be worn close to the skin, though ideally not in direct contact with it. We'd recommend wearing a base layer beneath it, or a shirt – but putting a heated jacket on over several layers of jumpers and shirts defeats the object. The heating elements will warm the air trapped in those layers, but they'll insulate the body from it. This is why sizing is so important: if a heated waistcoat or jacket is loose, it won't warm you properly.

Our tests

We tested all the kit using a 12v motorcycle battery and the supplied wiring loom. We tested everything at its highest heat setting and have scored all the kit on five criteria.

Speed: It's important for heated kit to get up to temperature before a chill sets in when you're riding. Working inside a mobile refrigeration unit at 2°C, we used thermocouple dataloggers to measure how quickly garments reached their peak temperatures.

Heat: For jackets and vests we took the peak temperatures in the chest and back to get a body score and – where appropriate – the arms. For gloves we took the temperature on the back of the hand, the palm and in the middle finger. We also conducted a wearing test to assess how evenly the heat was spread across each garment.

Fit: Jackets and vests need to fit beneath riding jackets easily; gloves need to work sympathetically with cuffs and the wiring. Wires need to be easy to plug in. Any garment restricting movement or impeding fastening of the outer jacket is bad; gloves were marked down for reducing feel for the controls when riding. We tested each garment using a textile jacket with its own thermal liner fitted and again with the liner removed.

Controller: Check the spec to see if controllers are included: with many it's an extra (there may even be multiple options). We tested how easy these were to fit and operate with gloved hands and also whether the wearer noticed the different heat settings.

Finish: Our assessment of the quality of materials, construction and durability of the garment, controllers and wiring looms. →

BUYING CHECKLIST

Five things to look for

FIT

Heated kit needs to fit snugly and not be too baggy. It also needs to fit properly beneath your outer layers, without making them hard to do up or overly restricting movement.

POWER SOURCE

Ultimate heat comes from 12v power, from the bike's battery – but if you want to use a garment off the bike, consider kit that uses a power pack or has an optional power pack.

SYSTEM

Can the heated gear you're considering be expanded into a system? A heated jacket is one thing, heated gloves are another – a heated jacket that supplies power to gloves is better. If it's really cold you might want a jacket that will also power heated trousers, socks and gloves.

CONTROLLER

Is the temperature controller included with the garment, or is it an extra? If it's an extra, how much is it? If there's a choice of controllers, which will be easiest to use, getting the best from your combination of heated kit?

WIRING

Know your bike: where's the battery? If it's not under the seat, you need to be able to route the wiring loom so the socket emerges at the front of the seat. You need enough wire to reach the jacket comfortably, so it won't unplug if you shift in the saddle, but not so much that the end will drag on the road or dangle into the chain when it's not plugged in.



Still not hot enough?

For more warmth, add more bits

EXO2 StormShield heated glove (£120), **Heatsole heated innersoles** (£90), **StormWalker2 heated gilet** (£89) and **StormWalker2 jacket** (both have heated panels only in the lower back and inside the pockets), **Heatwave heated back support** (£70) and **Heatband neck warmer** (£60). **Power packs** are available for most garments (15v, with three-stage remote controller; or 12v with remote for EXO Glo).

Gerbing 12v heated trouser liner (£170), **heated socks** (£85), **glove liners** (£85) plus other glove options: **T-5** (£99) and **TEX12** using bike power only; **T12** (£150) and **W12 women's glove** (£143) using bike power or power packs. The **B12-800 battery and charger kit** (£160) comes with a three-step remote heat controller and a bum bag to carry the large power pack; the **1.4A battery kit** (£85) consists of two 12v power packs for gloves. There's also an extensive range of 7v heated products, but for motorcycle use, 12v is recommended.

Keis X2 heated trousers (£140, without controller), **X20 HiPowered bodywarmer** (£140), **X300 heated innersoles** (£160, with batteries and charger), **X200 heated inner gloves** (£70). **Optional battery pack and charger** (£60-£90).

Klan Heated Inner jacket (£118.50), **women's jacket** (£110), **women's waistcoat** (£87), **ultralight trousers** (£87), **heated trousers** (£99) all without cables (add £21). **Lycra socks** (£50), **inner gloves** (£50) and several gloves: **Prestige** (£110), **Racing** (£122), **Motorcycle** (£125) and **Easy** (£77), all without cables (add £30).

Oxford Hot Vest Classic (£149) using 7v power pack, extra packs cost £55.

Warm and Safe Heated trouser liner (£157), **heated socks** (£59), **women's jacket** (£175), **heated glove liners** (£59), **Classic rider's gloves** (£95), **women's gloves** (£95), **Bluetooth remote single heat controller** (£65) or **dual controller** (£100).

“To get the most benefit from heated kit, sizing is so important”

▲ Keeping warm is crucial in winter. If you're too cold you can't concentrate

Oxford 12v Hot Vest £149.99

Sizes XS-XXXL Controller included? Y Power pack option? N Powers gloves? N Powers other accessories? N
www.oxprod.com

A tight fit is essential to get the large heating panels in contact with the body, after which the Hot Vest heats up quickly and evenly - it's not the best here but it is really warm, with the low collar adding just a hint of luxury. The advantage of waistcoats is the lack of bulk and, even with that collar, there are no problems fastening the outer jacket properly. The Hot Vest fits comfortably inside our outer jacket when its thermal liner is in. The controller is included in the asking price and a simple push-button affair cycles through the four heat settings simply. It's compact and slick, but the button is virtually impossible to feel when wearing thick gloves. Overall, the Hot Vest is well finished, non-sweaty and fuss free.

Scores

Speed	5
Heat	3
Fit	5
Controller	3
Finish	4
TOTAL	20/25



RIDE MAGAZINE
BEST BUY

▶ Although no one will see it, the Hot Vest is stylish and fits beautifully



▶ The Hot Vest's pushbutton controller is simplicity itself



RIDE MAGAZINE
RECOMMENDED

▶ A nice fit overall, but the high collar gets in the way of the outer jacket a little

Gerbing 12v heated vest £149.99

Sizes XXS-XXXL Controller included? N Power pack option? Y Powers gloves? N Powers other accessories? N
www.gerbing.co.uk

Check the size you need carefully: Gerbing kit comes up large and a good, tight fit is essential to get the best out of this nicely finished waistcoat. It has one heating panel in the back and one on each side of the front, so they need to be properly in contact with your body. The high lined collar is also heated, and this is the only real gripe as it's bulky and stops the outer jacket fastening fully at the neck. It gets hot quickly and peaks at a respectable temperature. Despite the smaller size of the heating panels, the heat is felt nice and evenly. The optional controller is £40 and easy to use, otherwise it's best to get the £10 extension cable to plug it into the bike's loom. If used with a power pack, that comes with a three-level remote control.

Scores

Speed	5
Heat	3
Fit	3
Controller	4
Finish	4
TOTAL	19/25

▶ £40 controller looks a little cheaply finished, but works well



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▶ Good warmth circulates across the body, but the arms aren't given the same treatment

EXO2 StormChaser £259.99

Sizes S-XXXL Controller included? N Power pack option Y Powers gloves Y Powers other accessories Y
www.exo2.co.uk

The nicely finished StormChaser could pass for a casual jacket, once the glove wires are tucked into their pockets. The tall neck doesn't stop the outer jacket doing up properly. It fits under the outer jacket with the thermal liner in, although the neck is then a little tighter when fastened. It's not the fastest to heat up, but does get up to a good temperature, heating evenly across the front and back - sadly the arms don't feel quite so warm. The whole neck is heated: cosy. The breathable material means that even at full heat it doesn't get sweaty. The chunky £50 inline controller cycles through four heat levels with a rubberised button that's easily felt with gloves on - it's the easiest to use here. An even simpler bar-mounted unit is £40.

Scores

Speed	3
Heat	4
Fit	3
Controller	5
Finish	4
TOTAL	19/25

▶ Rubberised controller is tough and durable



Warm and Safe heated jacket liner £174.99

Sizes S-XXXL Controller included? N Power pack option? N Powers gloves? Y Powers other accessories? Y
www.riderz.co.uk

The silky Warm and Safe liner feels old-school next to the other full jackets, but it packs a massive punch. It may take a minute or so longer to reach full temperature, but it does offer the highest overall heat. It's also the least bulky of the sleeved liners, fitting inside the outer jacket when the thermal liner is in without stopping the neck fastening properly. The only catch is that it's the least breathable here, so it can get a little sweaty on full heat. The £70 dual controller, with one large knob for the gloves and one for the jacket, feels slightly Cold War-tech and is clumsy with gloved hands. A Bluetooth version (£95) can be mounted on the bars, where those knobs are easier to reach: simple and very effective. Just like the jacket.

Scores

Speed	3
Heat	5
Fit	4
Controller	3
Finish	3
TOTAL	18/25

▶ The controller is a bit 1970s and hardly the last word in ergonomics



RIDE MAGAZINE
BEST BUY

▶ You'll never get cold in this liner, sadly it's not as breathable as its rivals

EX02 StormRider
£179.99

Sizes S-XXL
Controller included? N
Power pack option? Y
Powers gloves? N
Powers other accessories? N

www.exo2.co.uk

The heat score is low because of the absence of sleeves and collar, but the StormRider does still keep your core really warm and it reaches its peak temperature pretty quickly. Not having a bulky collar or chunky sleeves helps the fit, as there's no drama getting our outer jacket securely fastened at the neck. It's even possible to retain the outer's thermal liner as the StormChaser is no bulkier than a chunky jumper.

It shares the same easy-to-use £50 inline controller and £40 bar-mounted controller as the StormChaser, but can also be operated with a simple £5.50 on/off unit.



▶ A lighter weight option, but it still keeps the core warm

Scores

Speed	.....	3
Heat	.....	2
Fit	.....	4
Controller	.....	5
Finish	.....	4
TOTAL	.....	18/25



Gerbing 12v heated liner
£169.88

Sizes XXS-XXXL
Controller included? N
Power pack option Y
Powers gloves Y
Powers other accessories Y

www.gerbing.co.uk

Outstanding in every respect but one: it's so chunky. Even when the lining of the outer jacket used for all these tests is removed it's impossible to fasten the outer's neck. The Gerbing's arms are so bulky they're hard to get down the outer jacket's sleeves and they limit the bend at the elbow. Sizing is on the generous side, apart from the short sleeves. If you're the right shape then it's superb: well finished with a plush lining, a windproof exterior and elasticated cuffs. It reached full temperature faster than the other full jackets and was one of the hottest. The £60 dual controller sets glove and jacket heat independently and is easy to use. Power-pack options are available.



▶ Odd sizing really lets down an excellent jacket line

Scores

Speed	.....	4
Heat	.....	4
Fit	.....	1
Controller	.....	4
Finish	.....	4
TOTAL	.....	17/25



Keis X25 heated jacket
£169.99

Sizes 48-62
Controller included? Y
Power pack option? N
Powers gloves? Y
Powers other accessories? N

www.keisapparel.co.uk

A well finished jacket that's just a touch too bulky if worn with our outer jacket's thermal liner fitted: the neck can't be fastened and the arms are hard to bend. Remove the outer's liner and things improve, but it's still hard to fasten the neck around the chunky collar. The cut of the body is slightly baggy, but the sleeves are a good length. More importantly, the X25 is a seriously warm garment, heat building steadily and evenly without becoming sweaty. The controller – which is supposedly £30 but has been included free with the jacket ever since it was introduced – is good but slick faced, so it's impossible to feel the button with gloved hands.



▶ Poor fit and poor controller let the X25 down

Scores

Speed	.....	3
Heat	.....	4
Fit	.....	2
Controller	.....	3
Finish	.....	4
TOTAL	.....	16/25



Klan heated waistcoat
£116

Sizes XS-4XL
Controller included? Y
Power pack option? N
Powers gloves? N
Powers other accessories? N

www.bits4motorbikes.co.uk

An old-fashioned heated waistcoat with heating wires running up and down the back and front, the Klan still manages to provide a decent level of warmth, evenly spread, including a pleasantly heated collar. It doesn't get as hot as many of the other garments on this test, but that simply means leaving the three-position sliding controller in its highest setting. Fit is very good – it sits easily under our outer jacket, even with the liner in, and the neck isn't bulky so doesn't disrupt fastening the outer. The garment is £95, without wires: a pack with the wiring loom and controller costs another £21. It does feel like the no-frills option, but it's a good no-frills option.



▶ Basic in style, but has a near-perfect fit and it's great value

Scores

Speed	.....	3
Heat	.....	2
Fit	.....	5
Controller	.....	3
Finish	.....	3
TOTAL	.....	16/25



Keis X10 heated bodywarmer
£109.99

Sizes 48-62
Controller included? Y
Power pack option? Y
Powers gloves? N
Powers other accessories? N

www.keisapparel.co.uk

Initially we found the X10 slower to heat and noticeably less warm than the sleeved X25 jacket – even allowing for the fact that there are no sleeves or collar. In fact, sizing plays a crucial role as a tight fit is essential to coax the heat from the chest and kidney panels. Even when that's sorted out, it's still not the hottest here. The real ace in the X10's hand is how compact it is – even with the outer jacket's thermal liner retained there are no issues with fastening the outer. It's nicely finished and uses the same (should be £30, currently free) controller as the X25, so is equally fiddly with thick gloves on. However, at this price the X10 is a bargain.



▶ Not as warm and slower to heat up, but good value at £110

Scores

Speed	.....	2
Heat	.....	2
Fit	.....	4
Controller	.....	3
Finish	.....	4
TOTAL	.....	15/25



EX02 ExoGlo bodywarmer
£139.99

Sizes S-XL
Controller included? Y
Power pack option? Y
Powers gloves? N
Powers other accessories? N

www.exo2.co.uk

Styled like an outdoor garment, the ExoGlo comes with a loom to connect it to the bike. It builds heat more slowly than some others here, with heating panels only in the lower back and on the chest, but it does eventually reach a decent temperature as the thick insulated material spreads the heat well. Despite the quilted look, it isn't bulky and fits well beneath the outer jacket, even with the liner fitted. The low padded collar doesn't stop the outer fastening but does bring welcome warmth to the neck. With a power pack option (including a three-step remote control) it could be ideal for short journeys and off-bike use.



▶ Looks like a 1980s bodywarmer, but doesn't warm the body that well

Scores

Speed	.....	1
Heat	.....	2
Fit	.....	4
Controller	.....	3
Finish	.....	4
TOTAL	.....	14/25



Power pack or bike battery?

With all heated motorcycle kit you face a choice: using a power pack or wiring a loom onto the bike's battery and plugging your kit into it each time you ride. What's right for you depends on what you need from the kit and how often you intend to use it.

For all-day warmth, you want something wired onto the bike's battery. The 12v current produces optimum heat and it never runs out, as the bike's generator keeps the power up. The drawback is that you are tethered to the bike by a wire – in practice, not much of an inconvenience. Most bike-powered kit can expand to become a full system, with the one wire from the bike powering jacket, gloves, trouser liners, even inner soles or socks. You may not need all the extras, but for rides over an hour long kit powered from the bike is the way to go.

Heated gear that uses a power pack is convenient and flexible, as it can also be used off the bike – anyone who's ever stood on a frozen touchline in winter, watching their kids play sport, will appreciate the off-bike benefits of a heated waistcoat. The trade-off with this is that most power packs can't get a garment as warm as the bike's 12v battery. Even the best cool down as the charge diminishes – and then it runs out. But if you have only a short commute and can recharge the power pack while you're at work, this can be the ideal solution.

“Most power packs can't get a garment as warm as a 12v battery”



▶ Wiring a feed into the bike's battery can be a five-minute job, depending on where it's located



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BEST BUY

Gerbing XR12 £159.99

Sizes XXS-XXXL
www.gerbing.co.uk

Beefy leather/textile gloves with a robust knuckle protector. Can be powered with the included wiring loom, from a Gerbing jacket (set by the dual controller) or by cuff power packs. Powered from the bike, they get really warm on fingers and knuckles.

The only catch is the bulk: they are too big for many jacket cuffs. The padded palm and fingers limit feel.

Scores	
Speed	4
Heat	5
Fit	2
Finish	4
TOTAL	15/20

EXO2 StormGuard £99.99

Sizes XXS-XXL
www.exo2.co.uk

These leather gloves with a proper knuckle protector and secure wrist adjuster warm up fast and are one of the warmest here, heating evenly across fingers, palm and the back of the hand. Though chunky, feel is reasonable and they fit well under the sleeves of our test jacket. Can run be powered from the bike or from the EXO2 StormChaser jacket.

Scores	
Speed	4
Heat	5
Fit	4
Finish	4
TOTAL	17/20



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RECOMMENDED



RIDE
MAGAZINE
RECOMMENDED

Keis X800i £149.99

Sizes S-XXL
www.keisapparel.co.uk

Well finished gloves with a proper knuckle protector and a superb control system: each one has a button on the back to cycle through three heat modes. Though heat builds more steadily than some, they do get good and hot. Can be powered from the bike with the supplied wiring loom or from a Keis heated jacket, and left a good feel for the controls.

Scores	
Speed	2
Heat	4
Fit	4
Finish	5
TOTAL	15/20

Warm and Safe Ultimate Touring Gloves £124.95

Sizes XS-XXL
www.riderz.co.uk

A very traditional-looking, comfortable soft-leather glove with a hard knuckle protector. Builds up to a good temperature, adjustable when powered through the jacket. Good feel when riding and fits well with jacket cuff. If not powered through the jacket, wiring needs to be bought separately, costing £21.

Scores	
Speed	2
Heat	4
Fit	4
Finish	4
TOTAL	14/20



Keis X900 £130

Sizes XS-XXL
www.keisapparel.co.uk

Nicely finished leather gloves, but lack knuckle protection. Can be powered from the bike with the included loom, from the Keis heated jacket, or from cuff power packs. Without those, the cuffs will (just about) go under a jacket sleeve. Heat builds slowly, but is very good. Each glove has three settings, selected from a button on the back: a superb system.

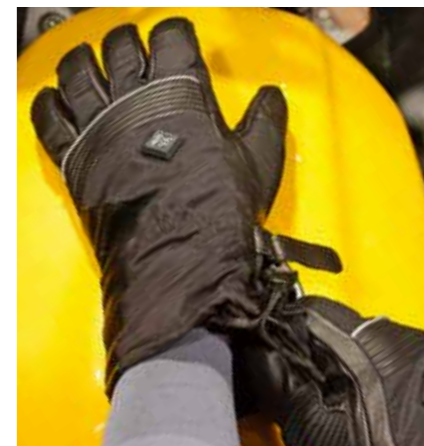
Scores	
Speed	2
Heat	4
Fit	2
Finish	4
TOTAL	12/20

Gerbing G12 gloves £119.99

Sizes XXS-XXXL
www.gerbing.co.uk

Very warm but bulky gloves made of soft leather, but lacking knuckle armour. Come with a wiring loom or have the potential to plug into a Gerbing jacket - at which point temperature can be controlled with the Gerbing dual controller. They are chunky enough to reduce feel slightly when riding, but they're so warm you won't mind. Good value at £120, too.

Scores	
Speed	3
Heat	4
Fit	2
Finish	4
TOTAL	13/20



Wind chill

Wind chill can strip warmth away as soon as it's generated. On a day when the ambient temperature is 0°C, the wind chill at 60mph will feel like -19°C. Even when it's a mild early winter 5°C outside, doing 60mph will feel like -11°C. This makes a windproof outer crucial, but may also give heated garments that have their own windproof facing an advantage, as a second line of defence.

Keeping the wind out makes being able to fasten the outer jacket securely very important. It also makes being able to retain the outer jacket's thermal liner helpful as this offers another layer to disrupt with wind chill and trap warm air against the body.



Klan Pro-Excess heated gloves £135.88

Sizes XS-XXL
www.bits4motorbikes.co.uk

Fabric gloves with proper knuckle armour. Though they feel thin, they generate enough heat to keep hands warm. They fit brilliantly with our jacket and the feel is superb. The only downside is that the wires can also be felt, reducing comfort. Comes with a wiring loom and three-position heating control (off, low, high).

Scores	
Speed	3
Heat	2
Fit	3
Finish	4
TOTAL	12/20

Oxford 12v Hot Gloves £149.99

Sizes XS-XXL
www.oxprod.com

Chunky leather-and-fabric gloves lack a hard knuckle protector but are thick and solidly made. They heat up quickly and keep hands respectfully warm, though the lining is slightly sweaty. As they're so bulky, feel is reduced when riding and the chunky cuff didn't fit under our jacket. Wiring is included. Activation is via a button on the back of the hand.

Scores	
Speed	3
Heat	3
Fit	2
Finish	4
TOTAL	12/20



THE RIDE VERDICT

THE HEARTENING THING isn't just that all the kit we tested was good: it's that the choice and quality of heated kit has clearly improved since we last tested electrically heated riding gear four years ago. All of the garments you see here are good - every single one of

them can absolutely enhance your cold-weather riding experience.

Of course, there are substantial differences between them. For ultimate heat we recommend that you plump for a sleeved jacket liner; the Warm and Safe one - which generated the highest

temperatures in our test - earns a Best Buy award. The non-bulky, quick-to-heat Oxford Hot Vest picks up the Best Buy for the waistcoats. They're both very functional biking mid-layers. If you want a flexible garment that can be worn off the bike as well, we give Recommended triangles to the Gerbing 12v Bodywarmer and the EXO2 StormChaser jacket.

The competitively priced EXO2 StormGuard glove wins our Best Buy award: as well as being one of the best all-round gloves here, it's also the lowest priced one on test. However, the rugged and very warm Gerbing XR12 glove and Keis X800i also perform to an extremely high standard, so earn Recommended triangles.

When all the gear is of such good quality, you won't regret investing in any of it, as it can all make riding on chilly days a comfortable delight. **R**

NEXT MONTH...
High-end sat navs tested
PLUS RIDE's Winter Gear Guide

